

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
SS-15 ICA-11 /081 W
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P 311520Z JUN 78

FM AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5929
INFO AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE
AMEMBASSY MADRID PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY

CONFIDENTIAL YAOUNDE 3212

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, EG, SP, VT
SUBJ: EQUATORIAL GUINEA: MASIE MOVES AGAINST CATHOLIC CHURCH

1. I HAVE JUST LEARNED FROM SPANISH CHARGE JUSTE AND PAPAL PRO NONCE MONSEIGNEUR UHAC THAT MASIE LAST WEEK CLOSED LAST OF CATHOLIC CHURCHES REMAINING OPEN (BELIEVED TO BE ONE IN BATA AND TWO OR THREE ON MASIE NGUEMA ISLAND) AND HAS SINCE ARRESTED REMAINING SIX SPANISH PRIESTS. THEY ALLEGEDLY BEING HELD FOR 4 MILLION EKUELE RANSOM (APPROXIMATELY \$57,000). AMOUNT WILL PROBABLY BE PAID BY EITHER SPANISH GOVERNMENT OR VATICAN.

2. COMMENT: THESE LATEST INCIDENTS MAY BRING TO AN END WHAT HAS BEEN ALMOST CONTINUAL HARASSMENT OF CHURCH. LIFE PRESIDENT MASIE HAS REPEATEDLY THREATENED TO CLOSE CHURCHES, CONVERT THEM TO COCOA WAREHOUSES OR PARTY MEETING HALLS, INSISTS HIS PICTURE BE HUNG NEXT TO OR INSTEAD OF CHRIST AND ARRESTED AND HELD FOR RANSOM BOTH PRIESTS AND NUNS. HE BELIEVES CHURCH COMPETES FOR LOYALTY OF POPULATION AND THAT EXPATRIATE PRIESTS SOURCE OF INFORMATION LEAKING OUT ABOUT CONDITIONS

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WITHIN EQUATORIAL GUINEA.

3. WE WILL SUBMIT FOLLOW-UP REPORTS AS WARRANTED.
SMYTHE

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NNN

*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** CONFIDENTIAL

Message Attributes

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